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ABSTRACT

If education is to be truly successful in preparing young people for the global realities of the next century, teachers must utilize methods and materials attuned to the imperatives of the future rather than to the needs of the past. New paradigms of learning must reflect international and multicultural dimensions of education and of life in general. Dichotemistic and narrowly defined concepts of human interaction must be replaced with collaborative, multifaceted, process-oriented world views. The teacher's traditional self-concept, defined as a transactionally focused repository of information, must give way to a more useful role as a transformationally oriented facilitator of student learning. Rather than rote memorization of static data, students can learn how to use effectively a wide range of information in critical and creative modes of thought and interaction with others, to broaden the base of potential for self, society, and planetary advancement. (Author/DB)

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PREPARING BEGINNING TEACHERS TO PREPARE THEIR STUDENTS FOR SUCCESS IN THE GLOBAL REALITIES OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: PRESENT NEEDS, FUTURE IMPERATIVES

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ABSTRACT

If we are to be truly successful in preparing our young people for the global realities of the next century, our beginning teachers must enter their classrooms ready to engage their students with methods and materials more attuned to the imperatives of the future than to the needs of the past.

New paradigms of learning must reflect international and multi-cultural dimensions of education and of life in general. Dichotemistic and narrowly-defined concepts of human interaction must be replaced with collaborative, multifaceted, process-oriented world views.

The teacher's traditional self-concept defined as transactionally-focused repository of information must give way to a more useful role as transformationally-oriented facilitator of student learning. The rote memorization of static data must be superceded by learning how to effectively use a wide range of information in critical and creative modes of thought and interaction with others, to broaden the base of potential for self, society, and planetary advancement.

The world of the twenty-first century has long been the subject of dreams, mystery, and speculation. It seems almost unbelievable that we are today only a bit more than one brief decade away from entering that world.

What sort of world will it be in those first few decades of the next century — the world in which an entire generation of today's students will enter their adulthood and begin to assume leadership roles in industry, government, and education, while starting families of their own? Based upon what we now project that world to be, how should we educate our youth so that they are best prepared to be fully-functioning, fully-participatory, competent adults in the early twenty-first century? How should we train our young people to responsibly and thoughtfully recreate our world? Following from this focus, how can we best prepare our beginning teachers to help young people to grow and develop into such persons?

It is a truism that we are all continually and intimately involved in the dynamic process of reinventing ourselves and our world. As never before, we today acknowledge change as our only true constant. The pace of that change, worldwide, is perceptibly accelerating at astonishing rates of speed. With the volume of information now at our disposal, we are able to track major world trends, to discern probable and possible future worlds, and to capitalize upon that information in determining options and strategies for the present and the decades ahead. How should we utilize the data at hand? What kind of world do we want?

In the best of all possible future worlds, people would be creative in their perceptions, compassionate in their thoughts, and responsible in their actions. Every individual would strive, alone in in cooperation with others, to achieve the

greater good for all concerned. The products of every human process would be viewed within the larger scope of the processes which lead to those products, with the realization that integrity of process is at least as important as integrity of product.

In such a world, leadership would not be a concept relegated to the few. Instead, leadership would be viewed as an essential characteristic of every individual, who must successfully lead himself or herself throughout life, whether or not others may follow.

In that best of all worlds, planetary consciousness would evolve so that every person would regard every other person as a brother or sister, regardless of skin color, religious differences, national origins, or any other potentially divisive consideration. From a common human concern for one another would come a common concern for our home planet, on which we all must live, raise our families, and do the best we can to leave our world a better place than it was when we arrived.

Every person, in such a world, would base individual actions upon the realization that he or she is here for only a very brief time; that countless generations have lived in our Earth space before our time; and that, with the proper attention to present and future needs, we can help countless future generations to enjoy life on this planet, long after we are gone. We are Earth's tenants for our time. As such, we are the stewards and caretakers of our planet, with all the accompanying rights and responsibilities.

If Earth is to survive, and if humans are to flourish, a future-oriented world view must be given prominence in our societies, especially in our schools. Beginning teachers must enter their classrooms ready to engage their students with methods and materials more attuned to the imperatives of the future than to the needs of the past.

Tragically, little is being done to address this challenge in today's classrooms around the world. Current instructional modes of choice, especially

teacher-focused instruction, extensive use of the lecture mode, emphasis on rote memorization of static information, and "objective" testing of student knowledge — are remnants of the past.

Old paradigms of education, as Marilyn Furguson reminds us, emphasize "content, acquiring a body of right information, once and for all." Learning is viewed as a product, a destination. Emphasis is on the external world, in which divergent thinking and inner experience are most often "considered inappropriate in a school setting." Schools, curricula, and teacher methodologies are devised to enforce lockstep progress and age-grade compartmentalization. (1)

Schooling of this type "evolved to produce workers for the Industrial Revolution's factory-based economy, for work that requires patience, docility, and the ability to endure boredom. Students learned to sit in orderly rows, to absorb facts by rote, and to move through the material regardless of individual differences in learning speed," according to Arthur C. Clark, in his book, *July 20, 2019: Life in the 21st Century*. "But no factory jobs will be left in 2019. Except for a few technicians to watch over control panels, tomorrow's factories will be automatic, with computers directing robot workers." (2) To successfully prepare our young people for the global realities of the next century, we must employ new paradigms of learning which define learning as a process, not as static end points. Emphasis must be placed on learning how to learn, developing a sense of intellectual curiosity, and learning how to ask incisive questions.

Education should empower both teachers and students. True power very often resides with the person who formulates the questions, rarely with the person who simply comes up with the "one right answer." If our young people are to learn how to empower themselves (a skill they will certainly need in order to lead our world safely and successfully), then they must be taught the importance of questioning. In the process of questioning, people find meaning for their lives

as well as answers, however tentative, for their needs and dilemmas. Young people must be taught how to live inside their own questions as they explore those of others. They must learn how to take ownership of their own lives.

This can best be done in nonauthoritarian educational structures and processes, in which the teacher does not simply channel information to students, but rather shares in exploration and discovery with students, posing relevant and challenging dilemmas and encouraging students to apply creativity and critical problem-solving methods toward their solution. The teacher becomes, in such a setting, a learner leading other learners to explore possibilities and to enlarge the spheres of their questions and understandings.

Instructional methodologies, materials, and curricula must be adapted to encourage young people to think about the ways in which they perceive, think, act, and react. Metacognition is an essential element of self-understanding, which in turn is a requirement for individual growth, as well as for social and planetary responsibility.

Robert Ornstein and Paul Ehrlich suggest that the goal of education must be to "encourage students to think about the nature of their own minds and... about underlying physical and biological principles that govern the world, and about long-term trends in that world, as early and as continuously as possible in their schooling." Refashioning how people are educated, they emphasize, "could have enormous import for the future of our species." (3)

The new world of the 21st century will require great personal investments from every inhabitant of our planet. We will require a human community in which mutual respect, concern, and support spring from human spirits who esteem themselves and others, and who carry that esteem into their interpersonal, intercultural, and international relations. In the words of Rushworth Kidder: "If we are to make the next century an age worth inhabiting, we will not do so simply

by resolving, from the top down, the issues on the formal agenda. We will do it because individuals everywhere, taking to heart the personal agenda, are building within themselves a sounder society from the ground up." (4)

The building of a "sounder society" imples change, hopefully change for the better. And yet, contemporary schooling is almost entirely focused upon transactional behavior, designed to perpetuate the status quo. The world of the 21st century will require the efforts of people who are transformationally-oriented, who seek an improved world by leading others to act as agents of change. (5) It will require people who "move beyond received wisdom, to combine ideas from unconnected sources, to embrace change as an opportunity to test limits. . . to see problems . . . as wholes, related to larger wholes, and thus challenging established practices — rather than walling off a piece of experience and preventing it from being touched or affected by any new experiences." (6)

Teachers can help their students develop these characteristics by establishing learning environments in which young people feel that they belong and are loved and accepted, in which they feel a genuine sense of their own power and impactfulness, and in which learning is made into a creative challenge. (7)

Cognitive and psychomotor dimensions of learning and instruction must be grounded in the affective domain, which educators recognize as the wellspring of self-esteem, motivation, and even physical and mental well-being. Current and past educational practice has too often demeaned and dismissed affective considerations as irrelevant or counterproductive. Yet, we know that none of us — teacher or student — is fully capable of leaving his or her affective self outside the classroom door. Psychotherapist Reuven Bar-Levav reminds us that "traditionally we have devoted much time and energy to teaching the subjects that can be learned by understanding, but we have neglected feelings, the more powerful system. . . . Denial of feelings and the rejection of emotionality do not indicate

enchantment with rationality but rather a secret recognition that thinking is normally no match for feelings." (8)

If honest recognition of feelings is so vitally important to our species' well-being, why do we insist upon cloaking our innate emotional base in so many aspects of the learning process? Could it be that our fears of self-revelation and personal vulnerability produce a kind of emotional paralysis, which in turn makes it difficult for our students to connect with us in the most basic human terms?

Carl Rogers has found that, of all the qualities that facilitate learning, the most basic quality is "realness or genuineness. When the facilitator is a real person, being what she is, entering into a relationship with the learner without presenting a front or a façade, she is likely to be far more effective. This means that the feelings that she is experiencing are available to her, available to her awareness, that she is able to live these feelings, be them, and is able to communicate them if appropriate. It means that she comes into direct personal encounter with the learner, meeting her on a person-to-person basis. It means that she is being herself, not *denying* herself." (9)

Finally, if our young people are to be prepared for the global realities of the 21st century, they must grow in awareness of the world around them. In their schooling, they should be given ample opportunities to explore critical local, national, and planetary issues, through reading, interviews, discussions, and debates, as well as personal and group projects which give them a chance to invest their own resources of time and talent in the betterment of their, and our, world.

If all of this makes sense, we are then left with the question: How can we best train our beginning teachers to facilitate the learning, growth, and development of their students in such a way as to foster transformational leadership of self and others toward the creation of a better planetary society?

Although a definitive listing of possibilities is outside the parameters of

this paper, a few recommendations follow from the above discussion:

• Beginning teachers must themselves enjoy personal exploration of thoughts and feelings, as they must enjoy sharing ideas and feelings with young people. Those who exemplify such characteristics should be encouraged to enter the teaching profession. Beginning teachers should, of course, be well-grounded in their academic disciplines. Beyond that, they must enjoy a life of the mind as well as a healthy life of the heart. They should themselves be *confluent* learners, committed to the process of merging affective and cognitive dimensions in their own lives, toward their own exploration of life and personal growth. If teachers learn to relish and develop their own curiosity, and if they *live* their own questions, then they will be better able to foster these life-enhancing characteristics in their students. Formal training programs for careers in education would do well to incorporate opportunities for formal and informal exploration of these dimensions. Appropriate group and individual counseling programs, geared specially to the needs of teachers, may be helpful in this regard.

• To gain greater awareness of their own internal motivations and of their own physical and psychological presence, beginning teachers should have some experience in dramatic stage productions, or at the very least a class or two in the dramatic arts. Albert Einstein has suggested that the teacher should be "a kind of artist in his province," and that, ideally, "teachers should grow up in such schools." (10) Most teachers, unfortunately, do not grow up in schools where teachers exemplify and model artistry in either an intellectual or physical sense. Therefore, what we do not learn from role models, we develop — or not — in the course of our teaching careers. Formal instruction in the dramatic arts, however rudimentary, would be a welcome step in the direction of remedying current deficiencies.

• Most teachers model the instructional methods they experienced

as students. They are familiar with approaches such as lecture/note-taking, rote memorization of facts, and evaluation of learning through objective testing. For the most part, those methods are based on outmoded paradigms of education which will be less helpful to our students in their future than they have been in the lives of their teachers. Professional educators must be trained in newer, more interactive and confluent methods of learning and instruction, including cooperative learning, critical and creative problem solving, interdisciplinary instruction, and the effective utilization of the widest possible range of resources.

- Beginning teachers who are given encouragement to try alternative methods with peers in teacher-training classes and with younger people in their first actual teaching experiences will gain a sense of comfort with those techniques, as well as a greater steadiness in their own abilities to explore yet-untried methods with their students. As the teacher becomes more comfortable with his or her own creative expression in the classroom, that teacher will feel far less threatened by the creative expression of students. Thus, the foundation for transformational, process-oriented perceptions, thoughts, and behavior on the part of both teacher and students can be established and nurtured.

- Teachers, particularly beginning teachers, must be well-acquainted with their world, from neighborhood to planet, just as they must be comfortable with themselves as individual beings. Teacher training must include a penetrating exploration of the most critical social, economic, political, cultural and ecological issues of our times, in preparation for the teachers' later work with students.

- The world of the 21st century will most certainly be a much more intercultural and international setting than the present-day world. Many of our students will feel as natural with people from all around the planet as we today feel with our neighbors and countrymen. Television and the other media will continue to shrink our globe and connect us more tightly to one another, no matter what our

geographic locations may be. Teachers who are preparing our young to make the most of opportunities posed by our increasingly interconnected, interdependent, and divergent world must themselves become comfortable with interconnection, interdependence, and divergence. Expectations of the "one right answer" on objective fact-based exams produce dichotemistic, competitive, "either/or" modes of thought and action, which in turn help to justify the development of transactional and polarizing mindsets. Teachers must explore alternative ways of evaluating student progress, which support collaboration, appreciation of the richness of other cultures and ways of thinking about the world, toward mutuality of understanding and the evolution of planetary consciousness in all of Earth's human inhabitants.

- Perhaps most importantly, beginning teachers should be trained to be advocates for a new educational paradigm which supports the role of teacher as facilitator of student exploration and discovery, rather than as the repository and dispenser of information. Such a paradigm will set in motion a wealth of resources to enrich teachers and students in their work together, and will encourage young people to empower themselves and others in their everyday lives. Only if we guide and encourage our young to actualize their own potentials toward self- growth and societal improvement, can we hope that they will succeed in creating a better world than the one we are leaving in their hands.

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